



# NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

## Education Services Newsletter

Spring/2010



### In this issue:

**From Cellblocks to Classrooms**

**Nevada's  
Correctional Adult  
Education Overview  
1993-2009**

**Norway's Human  
Ecology Experiment**

**Innovative Program  
of the Quarter-SDCC  
Braille Program**



**Two men look out the  
same prison bars; one  
sees mud and the  
other stars.~  
Frederick Langbridge**



## FROM CELLBLOCKS TO CLASSROOMS

The United States now has both the highest incarceration rate and the largest total number of people behind bars of any country in the world: 2.3 million. For the first time in U.S. history, more than one in every 100 adults is currently incarcerated in jail or prison. The impact of this level of incarceration is specifically concentrated within particular communities, classes, and racial groups. In 2005, the national incarceration rate for whites was 412 per 100,000, compared with 2,290 per 100,000 for blacks and 742 per 100,000 for Hispanics. Recent studies demonstrate that young black men, particularly those without college educations, are the population most affected by incarceration.

Nearly 95 percent of the nation's incarcerated population will eventually be released and will return home to communities across the country. This year alone, more than 700,000 people will leave state and federal prison and more than 9 million individuals will cycle in and out of local jails. When they are released, many of these individuals will return to some of the most impoverished neighborhoods in the country. They will confront serious challenges as they struggle to reconnect with their families and neighbors and become productive members of society. The likelihood of these individuals returning to criminal activity is high: within three years of release, 68 percent of people released from state and federal prison are rearrested and over half return to prison. Identifying effective strategies for reintegrating the thousands of men and women who return home from prison and jail each year is critical not only for them, but also for the health and stability of their families and the safety and wellbeing of their communities. Given the potential impact on public safety, community well-being, and criminal justice budgets, prisoner reintegration should be an important priority for national, state, and local governments.

While there has been increasing discussion about the intersection of prisoner reentry and issues of workforce development, housing, health, and public safety, insufficient attention has been paid to the role that in-prison and post-prison education can play in facilitating successful reentry. Education has been widely recognized as a pathway to assimilation and economic mobility for immigrant and other disadvantaged populations throughout U.S. history. For people involved in the criminal justice system, education offers a path to increased employment, reduced recidivism, and improved quality of life.

Access to education is particularly important given current economic trends. Economists predict that the labor market will tighten in the next decade and that labor market inequality, particularly among unskilled workers, will continue to grow if the demands for skilled labor are not met. An ever-increasing share of jobs in the U.S. economy requires postsecondary preparation, and college-educated workers earn 26 to 36 percent more than individuals who have not attended college. If properly designed and implemented, education programs in correctional facilities and communities can provide individuals involved in the criminal justice system with the academic instruction, vocational training, and cognitive and life skills they need to succeed in today's economy. *-Pew Research Center/2009*

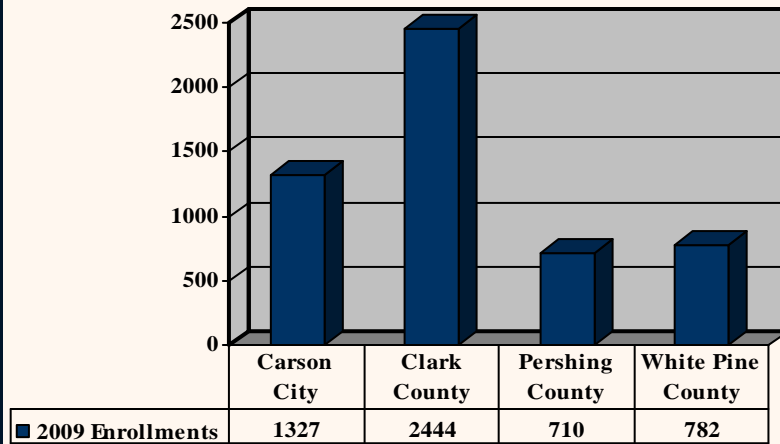
*Pew Public Trust-Pew studies and promotes nonpartisan solutions for pressing and emerging problems affecting the American public and the global community. In areas such as the environment, early education and the public's health and well-being, our experts partner with leading authorities to conduct research and advance fact-based change in the public interest. Pew Research Center is a Washington-based subsidiary of Pew.*



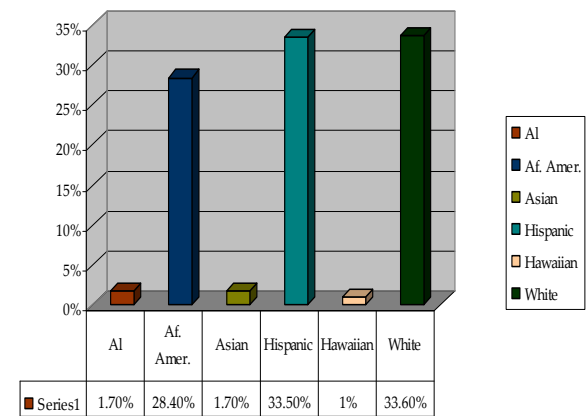
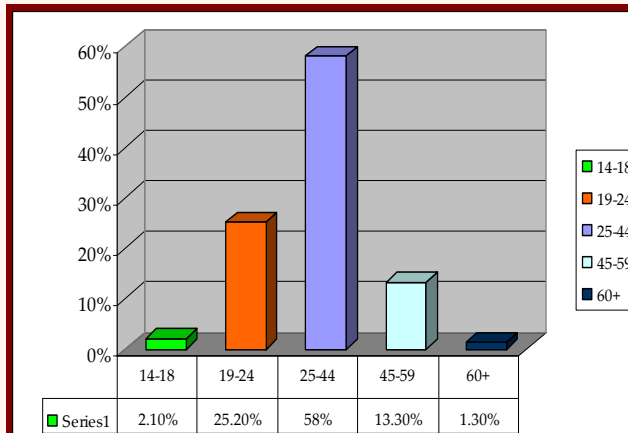
.....the best way to get something done is to begin.

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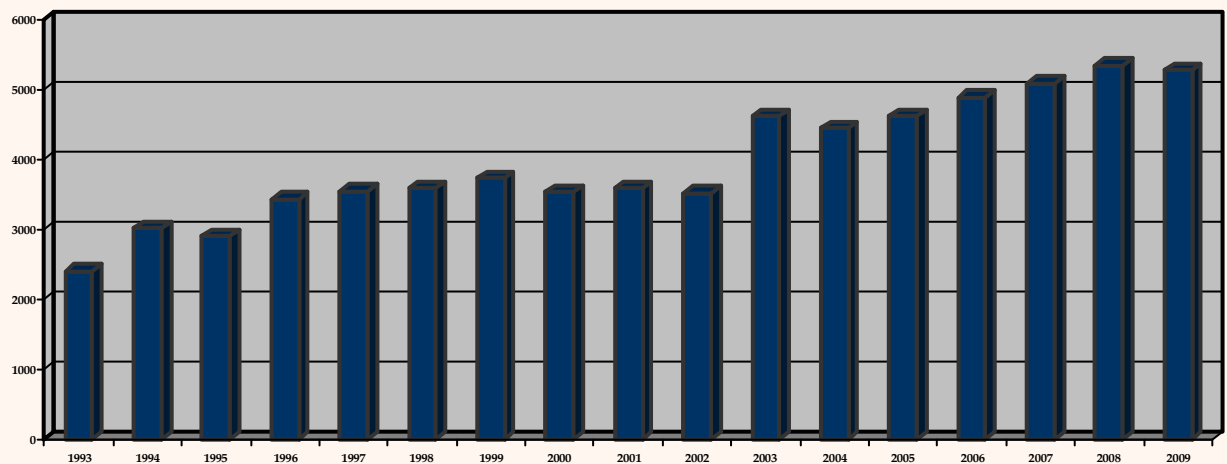
## Correctional Adult Education Overview 1993-2009



During the 2009 academic year, 5,263 NDOC inmates were enrolled in Nevada's Adult Education Programs. The chart on the left breaks down 2009 enrollments by four counties.

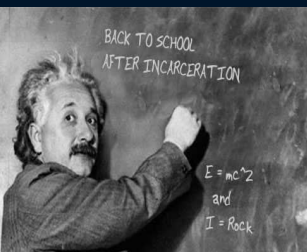
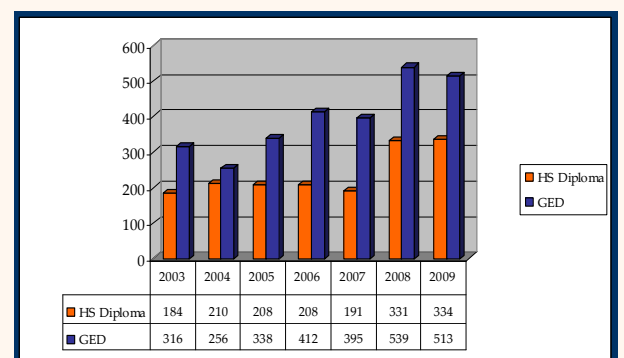


A demographic snapshot of our 2009 secondary education population by age and ethnicity.



From 1993 to 2009 Adult Education enrollments increased 52%.

From 2003 to 2009 High School Diplomas awarded increased 45% and GEDs 38%.





An inmate and horse rake up debris on a beach near Norway's Bastøey Prison. Ra

## RECYCLING, ORGANIC FARMING PART OF NORWAY'S "HUMAN ECOLOGY" EXPERIMENT

OSLO, Norway - The minimum-security Bastøey Prison, a lockup on a lush island that has often been compared to a summer camp, now has claimed a new distinction: the world's first ecological prison. Without locked gates or barbed wire, the prison operates with solar panels, wood-fire heating instead of oil, strict recycling and eco-friendly food production — a 10-year project officials say was aimed at helping the roughly 115 prisoners learn values such as protecting the environment and respecting others. "Our job is to create the best possible development opportunities for the individual, and lay the foundation for possible changes," said Prison Director Oeyvind Alnaes.

The Bastøey facility, where inmates include murderers and rapists, is nothing like the grim vision of prisons with barred doors that slam shut with a resounding clang during lock-downs. It is a lush green in summer, with beaches and an adjacent nature preserve. Inmates live in houses, are not locked in and are responsible for the care of about 200 chickens, eight horses, 40 sheep and 20 cows. They also tend the fields, pick berries and fish on the prison's 30-foot boat.

The island is about 1 1/2 miles from the mainland, but that's not what keeps inmates in. Few escape from Norway's most pleasant prison because that could mean returning to a maximum-security unit. All of the prison's agricultural products are raised without artificial chemicals, such as insecticides or man-made fertilizers, and with humane treatment of livestock. It also strives to be energy self-sufficient, using renewable power.

Alnaes said the prison's philosophy is what he called "human ecology." "Living in an environment that gives them individual responsibility, challenges and demands ... can motivate inmates to change their behavior," he said. Norwegian Justice Minister Knut Storberget said it was "a symbol that it is possible to think differently. ... We need alternatives to prison, and different prison alternatives."

Norway does not have the death penalty and the maximum prison sentence is 21 years. Few prisoners serve the entire term. At Bastøey, inmates can study, seek counseling, play tennis, have their own TV and swim in the waters around the island, some 45 miles south of the capital, Oslo.

An inmate serving a sentence for narcotics smuggling stated that at his previous maximum-security prison he grew depressed and psychologically troubled. "When I got to Bastøey, it was like I got air under my wings," Prisoners must apply for the chance to serve their sentence at Bastøey, which asks applicants on its Web site: "Is Bastøey the place for you?" -*Oslo Daily Aftenposten*

## INNOVATIVE PROGRAM OF THE QUARTER

### SOUTHERN DESERT CORRECTIONAL CENTER BRAILLE PROGRAM

Somewhere in Las Vegas, a first-grader is learning to read, grandma is searching for the nearest gym, and a teenager is reviewing human resource policies of his new employer. What's shared by all three is they're doing it across their fingertips -- reading Braille.

It is estimated that there are about 10 million blind and visually impaired people in the United States today, and this number is growing. Medical advances at both ends of the age spectrum have inadvertently resulted in an increased incidence of blindness. Premature babies are being saved but can face lifelong disabilities, including visual impairments. Older adults are living longer and many develop degenerative eye diseases.



**SOUTHERN DESERT CORRECTIONAL CENTER BRAILLE PROGRAM cont.**

According to a 2002 report by Prevent Blindness America and the National Eye Institute of the National Institutes for Health, many more Americans are facing blindness today than ever before. The number of blind people in the U.S. is expected to double over the next 30 years as the baby boomer generation ages. The U.S. Department of Education currently serves approximately 94,000 blind and visually impaired students (K-12) across the country through special education programs.

Southern Desert Correctional Center inmates are learning to produce Braille materials for people who are blind. Learning Braille codes and formats to become a proficient transcriber takes considerable time and focused effort. This unique educational and training opportunity provides SDCC inmates with job skills and problem-solving experience, preparing them for useful employment upon reentry into society.

Their time is spent productively, they give back to society for the crimes they have committed, and opportunities for future employment are created that many never imagined possible. Research indicates that simply because the inmates are involved in education and vocational training while incarcerated, the likelihood that they will return to prison once released is reduced. Most importantly, inmates are providing quality Braille materials for people who need them -- particularly for students who are blind.

Since learning Braille can be difficult and time consuming, inmates selected for SDCC's Braille program must meet certain criteria. Inmates must have at least a high school education or GED equivalency. It is important that they have at least 3 years left to serve before they are eligible for parole, since it can take up to a year for inmates to learn literary Braille and begin transcribing. Inmates must have a clean record for at least the previous year (no disciplinary action), and must be recommended for the program by prison staff. In addition, basic computer skills are mandatory. At SDCC, working in the Braille program is considered a prestigious placement and there is a long waiting list of inmate applicants. And those who work at the center become role models for all the offenders at the prison.

Once an inmate is accepted into the program, basic knowledge of contracted Braille and competency in literary Braille transcription are determined through successful completion of a course of study offered through the Library of Congress, National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS). The amount of time it takes to complete the course and submit a sample 35-page Braille manuscript to NLS for evaluation varies greatly, but is generally between 6 months and 1 year, depending on the time commitment.

The difficulty of the Braille produced varies. For example, textbooks that are primarily literary Braille are considerably less complicated and time consuming than textbooks that contain many visuals (photographs, graphs, maps...). The concepts in these visual representations must be conveyed in a non-visual format for blind students. Before Braille transcription begins, extensive time is spent editing -- identifying the information presented in each visual and determining the best way to convey the same message to blind students. Through the transcription process, one print book becomes many volumes of Braille.

A detailed photograph may best be described in words, while a map may be reproduced in tactile graphics (raised-line drawings). Visual maps generally convey several concepts at once (cities, waterways, altitudes, land formations...). It may take a series of tactile maps to convey the same information, since cluttered maps are useless to blind students. There are also many specialized codes in Braille, such as computer and foreign language codes. The Nemeth Braille Code for Mathematics and Science Notation is more complex than literary Braille, requiring advanced training and certification. SDCC's Braille Program sets high quality control, whether it's cleaning out the tiny pops in the audio or making sure the punctuation exactly replicates the original text.

According to a national survey conducted by the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) in 2000, there is a critical shortage of Braille textbook transcribers across the United States. The survey indicated that 375 additional transcribers were needed in 2000 to meet the need for Braille textbooks for blind students, 750 more transcribers will be needed in 2005, and by 2010 the need jumps to over 1,000 additional Braille transcribers.



Since the number of blind and visually impaired students attending local schools has increased significantly in recent years, there is a growing demand for more Braille textbook titles in all subjects.

Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.  
-Joshua J. Marine

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